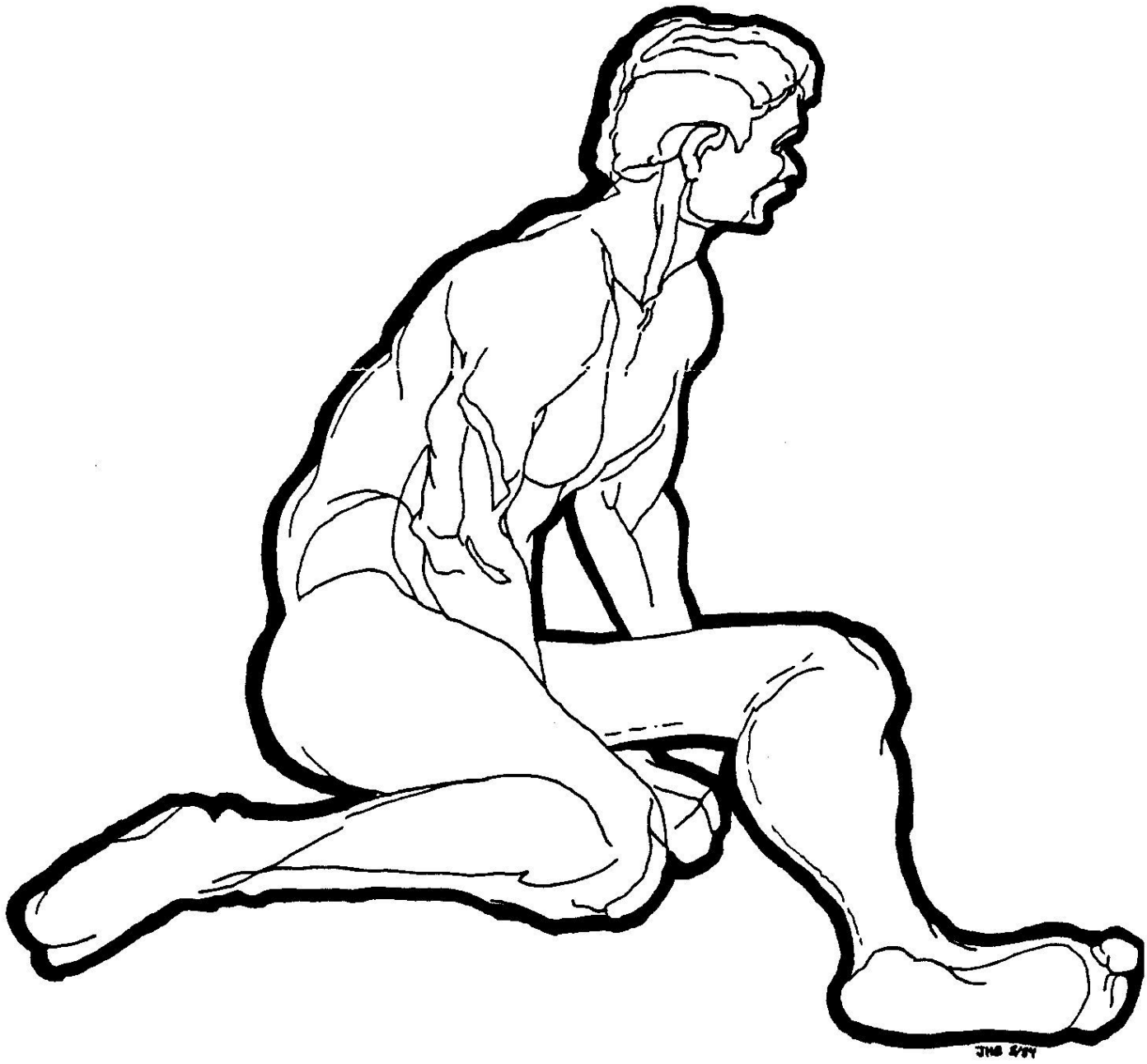
THE BI-MONTHLY

Newsletter of the Bisexual Center

Volume 8, Number 4 5 | $1.50 | September/October 1984



A.A. MEETINGS

The "Bi Bye Booze" group will suspend their regular Monday evening meetings until further notice, as the Bisexual Center has moved from Hayes Street.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

All materials submitted for the next Bi-Monthly must be received by October 20th. Your contributions of letters, articles, poems, drawings, etc., are URGENTLY REQUESTED, as are volunteers for the newsletter staff, including a co-editor. Mail all materials to The Bisexual Center, P.O. Box 421924, San Francisco, CA. 94124-1924, marked "ATTN: Jay Paul" (or "ATTN: Editor").

JULY 15th RALLY

Those who read the last newsletter will know that on July 15th, in front of Moscone Center, a rally was held to let Democratic Party Convention delegates and the world know that bisexuals both exist and can be a potent political force. The rally, sponsored by Bi Pol, the Eleanor Roosevelt Appeal for Full Equality, and the Oral Majority, was intended to let the delegates know that bisexuals must be acknowledged and guaranteed their civil rights along with gay men and lesbians, and press for a number of political planks in the Democratic platform (passage in 1985 of Federal non-discrimination legislation on the basis of sexual orientation, support for the E.R.A., support for reproductive rights, and an end to nuclear weaponry). Herb Caan readers also discovered our efforts to nominate a bi woman as V.P.--Lani Kaahumanu!!

THE BISEXUAL CENTER

P.O. BOX 421924
SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94124-1924
(415) 431-4431

FOUNDERS: Harriet Leve Maggi Rubenstein

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President.....David Lourea
Vice-President.....Maggi Rubenstein
Secretary.....Jay Paul
Treasurer.....Becca Thomas

Autumn Courtney, Steven Brown, Cliff Heaphy

this issue:

PUBLISHER: The Bisexual Center
COPYRIGHT: 1984 by the Bisexual Center, except as noted
EDITOR: Jay Paul

Production: Jay Paul
Addressing: Becca Thomas
Mailing: Maggi Rubenstein
Nate Brown

All materials submitted for publication become the property of the Bisexual Center and are subject to revision and/or editing at the discretion of the Newsletter Committee. Opinions expressed in such materials are those of the originator(s) and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Bisexual Center.

Cover illustration by Jim Barnes

membership

Gift membership?___ Acknowledgment needed?___

Name:_____
Address:_____
City:_____State:_____Zip:_____
Telephone:(____)_____
Skills:_____

Lifetime Member	$1000
Patron	$250
Sponsor	$100
Sustaining Member	$50
Regular Member	$25
Restricted Income	$15
Newsletter Only	$10

_____ Check here if a renewal

_____ Check here if you do not want to receive mail

Make check payable to "The Bisexual Center"
P.O. Box 421924, San Francisco, CA 94124

How did you here about the Bisexual Center?_____

FOR OFFICE USE: received by_____; paid_____; date_____; check #____

EDITORIAL: A question of survival?

Our 8th anniversary is here, but the celebration is apt to be somewhat muted. You can see the changes in the look of the newsletter. You may be aware of the move of the Bisexual Center from 1757 Hayes, our home for so long. Serious questions must be addressed about our future. I'll try to tackle three basic questions that I would expect such events to raise: What does this mean? How did this happen? What happens next?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? We certainly don't intend it to mean the end of the Bisexual Center. But financial realities make it clear we can no longer rent the space at 1757 Hayes. Quite bluntly, we cannot afford it (just as we have had to cut back on expenses for printing this newsletter).

We are returning to a box number for a mailing address, and we will have a new phone number for messages. The Bisexual Counseling Services will move upstairs to 1761 Hayes, but keep the same phone number. This means that social events and meetings formerly held at the Center will have to be held elsewhere: in rented spaces, in members' homes, etc. The future of the drop-in rap groups depends on whether a space can be found; until then, we will have to refer people to the bi rap groups at the Pacific Center in Berkeley.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? Initially, many of you may feel shocked and saddened, and you may find yourself thinking, "No one told me things were this bad." Possibly you may wonder who is "to blame," and start imagining "if only..." scenarios. But the search for scapegoats and attempts at rewriting what is now history are, at this point, self-indulgent exercises and a waste of energy that the Center needs from you.

The simple fact is that the Bisexual Center has been living beyond its means for a long time, and the day of reckoning has finally come. To give you some idea of the costs of running the Center, I'll mention some of the expenses we typically have each month. Rent: $350. PG&E: $30. Phone: $50. Trash disposal: $13. Ads in Coming Up! and Bay Guardian: $40. Bi-Monthly printing costs (½ of issue): $135 to $170. Postage for newsletter: $30. Just that adds up to at least $648 a month, and that doesn't include expenses for office supplies, xeroxing costs, party supplies, tea and coffee, etc. We have constantly been short money.

There are no villains in this piece; we must all take some responsibility. If anything, there are possibly some heroes and heroines, a small cadre of members who have subsidized the Center's operations with their own funds and energy long after the viability of our organization first became questionable. Financially, we have perenially been in crisis. (Members may recall notices in the newsletter, "rent parties," fund-raising efforts, messages at rap groups about the need for contributions, and more.) In addition, people may be aware of newsletter notices and other efforts to recruit new Board members, newsletter staff, help for social events, and volunteers for other tasks at the Center. The response simply has been insufficient.

Because the Center has offered so much for so long, its functioning may have been taken for granted. But do you realize all that is needed to maintain operations? Not only the money mentioned, but people volunteering their time and energy. No one gets paid for work at the Center, and yet a lot must be done. Have you ever thought of who does the following and how much time and energy is necessary? Mail must be sorted and answered. The Center's financial accounts must be balanced, income and expenses noted, bills paid, checks deposited. The phone must be answered. The Center cleaned periodically. Social events planned and scheduled. Party supplies bought, decorations put up, and then cleaned up afterwards. Supplies of tea, coffee, paper towels, garbage bags, etc., monitored and restocked. Membership lists revised, and renewal notices sent. Writing and typing of announcements and articles for the newsletter. Newsletter layout, paste-up, and delivery to the printer's. Making up mailing labels and dealing with mailing newsletters out. Rap groups led. Etc. The trend over time has been that fewer and fewer members have worked to keep things going.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? I hope you're asking "what can I do?" Come to a special meeting Sunday, 9/23, at 7:30 p.m. at the Institute, 1523 Franklin, S.F. and be ready to help!

THE BISEXUAL IDENTITY

PART II. CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY: CONTRIBUTIONS OF KINSEY AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS

By Jay Paul

In July 1938, an obscure Indiana University professor of zoology whose prior research had been on gall wasps, began collecting sex histories for what was to grow into a landmark project on human sexuality. Alfred Kinsey and his associates interviewed 18,000 individuals, with the data analyses in the companion volumes of Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948) and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (1953) utilizing 5300 male and 5940 female cases. Despite the controversy and criticism that immediately enveloped these works upon their publication, they continue to be a valued source of information on human sexuality decades later.

Kinsey and his associates were concerned that scientific opinion about homosexuality and sexual variations were more reflective of popular prejudice and myth than of reality. One of their study's intents, therefore, was to provide objective information on patterns of homosexual activity as they relate to patterns of heterosexual activity in the population as a whole. They pioneered in the use of a continuum to describe the varying ratios of coexisting homosexual and heterosexual response in their subjects' sex histories (a 7-point rating system popularly known as the Kinsey Scale).

Their findings exploded a host of assumptions about human sexuality, and were the focus of bitter attacks by a variety of foes: moralists and religious figures, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts. The Kinsey group rejected the view that erotic reactions between members of the same sex are rare and therefore abnormal, unnatural, or indicative of psychopathology. They based their conclusions not only on the incidence and frequency of homosexual response, but also "on its coexistence with heterosexual [response] in the lives of a considerable portion of the male population."

Publicity and controversy followed the 10% figure representing that portion of the male population with more or less exclusively homosexual histories. Scant attention was paid to the finding that fully 15% of the male sample could be termed bisexual on the basis of reported behavior, having had both "more than incidental" heterosexual and homosexual "experiences or reactions."

Findings for women show a similar ratio of "bisexual" to "homosexual" histories, although the general incidence of reported homosexual experiences is far lower than that of males. The gender differences may be assumed to have diminished since that time, given the changes in sexual mores (from a period that curtailed both expression of and acknowledgment of nonmarital female sexuality). It is also possible that incidence rates were under-reported as a consequence of differences in subjects' candor, given the social acceptability of discussing women's sexuality in that period, especially to male interviewers.

Kinsey's group also noted that if sexual orientation in assessed on the basis of an individual's behavior, one may conclude that sexual orientation changes markedly for many over the course of a lifetime.

There are limitations to the conclusions we can draw from the Kinsey research, particularly in terms of the issue of bisexuality and bisexual identity. Kinsey ratings were made by interviewers to categorize people by their sexual behavior over their lifetime, and does not necessarily reflect the respondent's current behavior nor sense of self. We cannot tell whether a rating near the midpoint reflects a person who has sexual feelings for both sexes at the time of interview, who has alternated between relationships with men and with women, who has related to members of both sexes but with narrowly defined age and or situational constraints to sexual behavior with one gender, or who appears to have made a clear shift from exclusively erotizing one gender to exclusively e-

rotizing the other.

Not only is there tremendous variability in the sexual patterns of those within any one category on the continuum, but there is tremendous variability in the way the individual and society interpret such behavior. The issues of self-definition and social labeling are important parts of how anyone views her or his sexuality. Despite research findings that disprove the simple heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy, many scientists and society as a whole have clung to the notion of two discrete and clearly distinguishable subsets of the population known as heterosexuals and homosexuals. The effects of this on those attracted to both genders will be discussed in a later section of this paper. At this point, we will continue to look at the data on human sexuality, and speculate on the social implications of sexual orientation in our society.

Anthropological data provide a useful comparison of our culture's basic assumptions of human sexuality to those of other societies, especially in terms of our notions of what is normative or "natural." A classic work in this area by Ford and Beach, Patterns of Sexual Behavior, came out in 1951. This cross-cultural analysis of sexual behavior utilized the written observations of numerous anthropologists (compiled into a data set known as the Human Relations Area Files). This leaves the study open to the usual problems of research that is based on secondary sources of information, but the authors support their conclusions with observations of sexual behavior among other species.

Ford and Beach found that homosexual behavior of one sort or another was considered normal and socially acceptable for certain members of the community in 64% of the 76 societies for which information was available. They concluded:

> When it is realized that 100 per cent of the males in certain societies engage in homosexual as well as heterosexual alliances, and when it is understood that many men and women in our society are equally capable of relations with partners of the same or opposite sex, and finally, when it is recognized that this same situation obtains in many species of subhuman primates, then it should be clear that one cannot classify homosexual tendencies as being mutually exclusive or even opposed to each other.

The authors concluded that cultural mores have a powerful influence on what is eroticized and what is not:

> Men and women who are totally lacking in any conscious homosexual leanings are as much a product of cultural conditioning as are the exclusive homosexuals who find heterosexual relations distasteful and unsatisfying. Both extremes represent movement away from the original, intermediate condition which includes the capacity for both forms of sexual expression.

Support for the idea of the tremendous flexibility of human erotic response comes from such anthropological studies as those of Herdt in Melanesia, in societies where homosexual behavior is expected of all males (based on a belief that this is how older males insure the masculinity of the younger males.) Often anthropologists have looked only at the symbolic justification for such behavior only, and have failed to consider its erotic level. This comes from imposing our own cultural assumptions about the nature of sexuality and sexual orientation on other societies. Other societies have other means of categorizing its population. Some cultures have no concept of individuals being heterosexual or homosexual. Or their definition of homosexuals may use other criteria. In most cases, societies pay less attention to the person with whom one is sexual, and more attention to the supposed masculinity or femininity of one's behavior. Those who take on the social role, dress, and activities of the opposite sex receive special labels (i.e., berdache, bate, sarombavy); all too often, anthropologists have referred to these individuals as the "homosexuals" of the society, reflecting our common assumptions about the relationship between whom one goes to bed with and one's self-concept as masculine or feminine. What we would regard as homosexual behavior would not be seen as such by many who continue sexual activity with others of the same sex, but who maintain gender role-appropriate behavior by their culture's standards (i.e., males taking the "active" role in sex with other men).

Cross-cultural comparisons highlight not only the differences in how sexuality is perceived, but the power of such constructs on sexual behavior. [To be continued.]

A Bisexual Speaks at L/G FDP

by Maggi Rubenstein

The following is the official text of the speech given by Maggi Rubenstein at the Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade on 24 June 1984. This is the first time that an openly bisexual person has been invited to speak at the Parade. As a longtime activist for sexual freedom and the rights of gays, bisexuals, and lesbians, as co-founder of both The Bisexual Center and San Francisco Sex Information, and as a continuing force within the bisexual community, it was only right that Maggi should have been asked to speak. Her topic was "in recognition of the need for coalition-building." Thank you, Maggi Rubenstein, for your eloquence and fire.

As I stand before you today, I recognize my responsibility in speaking for bisexual women and men. We've been actively supporting lesbian and gay rights for many years. Now, because of hard political work by many bisexual people, our voices are being heard across the country. In the gay press and in the lesbian and gay communities, however, there has been only occassional acknowledgment of bisexual rights. Today more than ever before, as we all face the AIDS crisis, we need each other for support and for unity. As allies we can build a coalition of <u>all</u> sexual minorities joining together without apology, demanding our rights in a homophobic <u>and biphobic</u> world.

Like lesbians and gays, bisexual people are <u>also</u> everywhere. Despite the reactionary anti-sex forces in charge of this country, a network of bisexual organizations, in community with our lesbian and gay friends, exists and is growing, and THE SUPPORT MUST GO BOTH WAYS. We can learn from young people, whose heroes are androgynous and who are breaking away from the old rules that say you can only be straight or gay, masculine or feminine, tough or tender, and who now say: we can be all those things. I look out at all of you today with love, knowing in my heart that if all sexual minorities work together we will be the majority, refusing to let oppressive forces in this country--even in this city--deny us our rights as equal citizens. We can support each other and grow together toward a society that accepts the sexual diversity of <u>all</u> its people.

Bisexual people have been supporting lesbian and gay rights all along, yet we are still seen as stepchildren, or as nonexistent, by many. We must take the energy that we spend airing our differences with each other and channel it toward a society of conscious people supporting each other, celebrating our similarities and accepting our differences. Myths and stereotypes about lesbian, gay and bisexual people affect everyone, and must be challenged daily.

The political consciousness of progressive bisexual people also includes support for the passage of federal, state and local sexual minority rights bills, passage of the ERA, increased funding for AIDS research and treatment, freedom of choice in reproductive rights, the civil rights--including sexual rights--and civil liberties of all people, a stop to U.S. intervention in Central America, and an end to nuclear madness.

Together we will win our common struggle for peace, for freedom for all people, and for validation of the full spectrum of sexual orientations. In closing, I say that next year the parade must reflect the rights of not only lesbian and gay people, but the rights of bisexual people and all other sexual minorities as well.

Maggi Rubenstein

Community Bulletin Board

SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING!!!!

On Sunday, September 23rd at 7:30 p.m., we will be having a special meeting for the Bisexual Center membership at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, 1523 Franklin St. We will be discussing the Center's current difficulties, and attempting to shape Bi Center policies and goals as we problem-solve. Your ideas and commitment to the Center are necessary if we are to continue many of our services. We will get the most accomplished if you think beforehand about how you would pricritize our organization's many functions, and consider what you are willing to do personally to make sure that those things important to you continue to happen.

BI POL MEETINGS

Bi Pol, an independent bisexual, lesbian and gay political action group, will be having its monthly general meeting on Friday, September 14th, from 7-9 p.m. at Valencia Rose (766 Valencia). All are welcome to join. This meeting will include discussing means of screening and endorsing candidates for this November's election. For more information on Bi Pol (including the date and location of October's meeting), phone 928-4194 or write to Bi Pol, P.O. Box 26227, San Francisco, CA 94126.

BOARD MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Board of Directors of the Bisexual Center will be Monday, September 17th at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Maggi Rubenstein. The October meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 8th at 7:30; meeting place to be arranged.

TUESDAY/WEDNESDAY RAPS

Until further arrangements can be made, the open mixed rap groups of the Bi Center will suspend operation. (To be discussed 9/23.)

WOMENS' EVENTS

WOMEN'S RAP GROUP

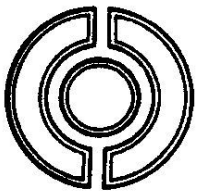
The leaders of the Women's Rap Group are trying to find places to hold the groups at the usual times--the first and third Mondays of each month at 7:30 p.m. These rap groups are a place for women to share feelings and thoughts around issues of bisexuality. They are not meant as a self-help therapy/support group or an intellectualization session, but as an opportunity to meet with women and share relevant issues in our lives. Women of all sexual orientations are welcome. A $3-$5 donation is requested. Phone the new Bi Center number (431-4431) to find out about meeting place.

LET'S PRETEND

Join us for a fun evening of fantasy, role-play, and play-acting. Do you want to rehearse coming out to Mom? Perhaps asking that special someone for a date? Or share how you <u>really</u> feel with....? Then meet other women on Monday, September 24th at 7:30 p.m. to try on a fantasy or two for size. A $3-$5 donation is requested. Place to be announced; call 431-4431 the week before for information.

WOMEN'S HOT TUB PARTY

Come with us for a fun, relaxing, and refreshing evening at OSENTO, a women's bathhouse. They have a hot tub large enough for mingling multitudes, a massage room with table, a reading and relaxation room, and a pleasant outdoor patio. All is clothing optional and women only. Bring a towel, massage oil, and anything else you'd like. (Osento will provide towels, if you prefer, for $1 each.) The evening will cost $2 (a donation to the Bi Center) <u>plus</u> $4-$7 to Osento (sliding scale). See you at the hot tub Monday, October 29th! Women will be meeting to car-pool to Osento at 7 p.m. Call 431-4431 for where to meet.



P.O. Box 421924
San Francisco, CA 94124-1924

FIRST CLASS

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

TO:

JAY PAUL
1907 Haste St, #6
Berkeley, CA 94704

"The Bi-Monthly September-October 1984 Vol. 8 Issue. 5." The Bi-Monthly, vol. 8, no. [5], September-October 1984, pp. [1]+. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, link.gale.com/apps/doc/SNLXSL400527624/AHSI?u=ubcolumbia&sid=bookmark-AHSI. Accessed 13 Dec. 2024.